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ABSTRACT

Although relatively few studies exist, a review of the research reveals some common characteristics of an effective music teacher. Effective music teachers tend to be extroverted, enthusiastic, and care sincerely for their students. Such teachers are competent in musicianship (particularly in diagnosing and correcting musical errors and in using voice in demonstrating performance technique), in classroom and rehearsal management, and in the ability to relate lesson objectives to student interests and needs. Frequent eye contact, use of physical gestures, and variation of facial expressions and speaking voice are characteristics of many effective directors. (IS)

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MUSIC TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

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MUSIC TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

Why is one music teacher more effective than another? What musical abilities, communication skills, educational experiences, music rehearsal techniques, and personality characteristics discriminate the competent music teachers from less competent ones? What classroom and rehearsal conditions are associated with students attaining high musical achievement? Such questions are central to the study of music teacher effectiveness, moreover, not only are music educators asking such questions, but so are principals, supervisors, parents, researchers, and legislators. What does the research literature say regarding music teacher effectiveness? Does the research provide a profile of the effective music teacher?

Definitive answers to these questions are frequently elusive. Afterall, music teaching is a highly complex process characterized by hundreds of personal interactions between student and teacher. Moreover, a host of variables affect a music teacher's effectiveness including the students' school and home environment, community and family expectations, whether it is two days or two months before the concert, and whether the general music class meets before or after lunch (Palonsky, 1977). Every first-year music teacher learns that a child's total environment and circumstances, both in and out of school, can negate a teacher's noblest intentions.

Music teacher effectiveness is at the core of the music education profession. As early as 1837, the Boston Schools were seeking effective music teachers for their newly established vocal music program. The effectiveness of such early music teachers such as Lowell Mason was determined by the quality of their students' musical performances (cited in Baker, 1982), an evaluative procedure still very much in effect today. Nearly one hundred years later, Mursell (1934) noted:

> Studies have been made which have investigated the cause of success and failure among very large numbers of teachers. It is found that the most frequent reason, either for success or for failure, is competence or the lack of it, by which is chiefly meant mastery of the material to be taught and knowledge of how to handle it (p. 282).

Even today a recent Gallup Poll on education shows that the public perceives the improvement of the quality of teachers as the best way to improve the American public schools. Within our specialized field of education, Erbes (1982) states that the major thrust in research of music teacher education should be to "identify those factors contributing to effective classroom teaching and conducting . . . (and to) identify those factors that set aside the truly superior music educator from his colleagues" (p. 274).

Searching for the "Good" Music Teacher

One of the difficulties of researching music teacher effectiveness lies with the problem of definition. Trying to define "good" or "superior" music teaching reminds this author of helping my wife shop for a dress in a shopping mall. After two hours of her trying on dresses (we already ate our way through the cookie shop and sampled the Hickory Farm treats), I finally asked what kind of dress she was looking for? Her response: "When I see it, I'll know it."

Similarly, it is this problem of definition that is one of the difficulties of researching music teaching effectiveness. Apparently, there are almost as many conceptions of effective music teaching as there are students, principals, music supervisors, parents, and music educators and researchers.

For example, Gelineau (1970) feels that "love in your heart" is the most essential quality for excellence in music teaching. She claims:

> . . . in my many years of classroom music supervision experience, I have found that some of the best music comes from rooms where teachers can't sing. Their secret (a delightful one to share) is that they have a sincere desire in their hearts to bring joy into the lives of their children. So you see it's not so much what's in your head as what's in your heart.
>
> All that's really required for teaching music in the elementary classroom is a few musical teaching aids and love in your heart. And the greatest of these is love (pp. vii-viii).

Hoffer (1983) perceives a number of ways music teachers can be effective, and offers a description of an effective music teacher:

> With some teachers their strength is their ability to play piano, with others it is an ability to inspire students, and with others it is their knowledge of music and their intelligence. Each person develops somewhat different ways to fulfill the role of teacher (pp. 15-16).

Bessom et al. (1980) believe that the music teacher's personality is the most important quality in determining effectiveness:

> The importance of the teacher's personality should not be minimized since the student who likes the teacher, and believes the teacher likes him, will learn more effectively . . . (p. 5).

Charles Leonhard sees "passion" in the teaching of music as a necessary quality for effective teaching. As explained by Peters and Miller (1982), Leonhard is not just referring to a passionate attachment to music or for the caring of children, but a "passionate commitment to ourselves and to our worth as a profession" (p. 13).

Differing perspectives concerning teacher effectiveness are also held by members of the research community. Researchers, particularly in the 1950s, focus on defining the effective teacher through the use of personality and other personal descriptors. For example, Ryans (1960), in his tour de force Characteristics of Teachers, concludes that effective teachers are democratic, fair, alert, understanding, kindly, stimulating, original, attractive, responsible, steady, confident, responsive, and posed. The ineffective teachers were characterized as partial, autocratic, aloof, evasive, harsh, dull, uncertain, excitable, erratic, stereotyped, apathetic, unimpressive, and restricted. As Getzels and Jackson (1963) note, what human exchanges are not better if the individuals involved

are fair, kind, and understanding? Such personality characteristics describe any pleasant, helpful, successful person. Is effective teaching simply defined as being a "good" person? Obviously, these saintly qualities, while desirable (for all of us), are not enough to account for successful teaching. Furthermore, a problem for researchers and teachers with such a personality-based teacher effectiveness construct is that teacher effectiveness research and evaluation are dependent on the observer's subjective opinion.

In the 1960s researchers such as Astin and Lee (1966) and Biddle and Ellena (1964) look to pupil performance as the ultimate criterion of a teacher's effectiveness. In their studies "teacher effectiveness" refers to the effect that the teacher has on learners. Thus, an effective music teacher is one who is able to bring about intended music learning outcomes. The two essential dimensions of effective teaching are intent and achievement--without intent student achievement becomes accidental or random, rather than controlled and predictable. Intent, however, is not enough to insure effective teaching because if students do not achieve the intended learning goals, the teacher is not considered fully effective (Cooper et al., 1982).

There are, of course, difficulties--both technical and philosophical--with inferring teacher effectiveness exclusively from student outcomes. First, we do not at present have satisfactory measures for assessing a broad range of student attitudes and achievement at different educational levels and in diverse subject-matter areas (McNeil & Popham, 1977). This is particularly true in music. Second, no known adequate measuring devices are available for assessing some of the most important outcomes that a musical education is suppose to achieve, such as love of music, musical initiative, and responsiveness to quality in music performance.

Philosophically, the use of measures of student learning as the sole determinants of teacher effectiveness is troubling as it ignores student variables as causes of classroom conditions and as sources for a teacher's effectiveness. Every teacher knows that a teacher can be more effective in one class than in another even though both classes

contain students of similar ages and abilities. Further, the use of student measures to determine teacher effectiveness would not assist a music teacher in improving his or her teaching competence. Student test scores or, for that matter, adjudication sheets, contest ratings, and concert performance quality, often fail to offer diagnostic information helpful to improve a music teacher's effectiveness. For instance, a contest rating of a "III" does define the problem, but does not provide any insight as to how the music teacher can improve. The intonation in the band may have been judged poor, but that does not tell the director how to help his/her band play in-tune.

During the 1970s and 1980s, researchers (e.g., Good, 1979; Rosenshine, 1979; Brophy, 1979; Taebel & Coker, 1980) take a somewhat different approach to defining teacher effectiveness by attempting to find out why some teachers are more successful in bringing about student learning than are others. This approach, often referred to as process-product research, concentrates on defining effective teaching by attempting to specify which variables and to what extent they affect learning. This research approach views effective teaching as the mastery of a complex set of competencies (e.g., teaching and rehearsing skills, musical knowledge, human relations techniques, management skills, and many other interrelated attributes) along with the ability to demonstrate such competencies and principles.

These general approaches to researching teacher effectiveness (personality-based, pupil performance, and process-product research) have been used by music education researchers. The results of their research need to be understood, questioned, discussed, and when appropriate, adopted by the members of our profession. What is to be gained? -- another step in our unending quest to be more effective music teachers.

Personality of the Effective Music Teacher

In Kemp's (1982) study of personality traits of successful British music teachers, he found that the successful (student) music teachers tended to be extroverted, realistic, and tough-minded. It is interesting to note that some music education majors may have difficulty reflecting these qualities (e.g., extroverted) as a great deal of their training involves long periods of solitude in the practice room with a primary interest on satisfying their own personal music needs and development. Successful music teachers, on the other hand, need to interact with large numbers of children and show an almost exclusive concern for meeting the musical needs and development of others.

How Music Teachers Define the Effective Music Teacher

Taebel (1980) asked 201 music teachers to rate a list of competencies in terms of their effect on pupil learning. Detecting errors or problems in musical performance, conducting skills, and use of vocal skills in illustrating various performance techniques were selected as the most important competencies for effective music teaching. Top rated generic competencies included program and self evaluation and monitoring appropriate classroom climate.

Another researcher (Baker, 1982) asked 119 music educators and general school administrators to identify those competencies they felt were essential to effective music teaching. The ten behaviors, qualities, and characteristics considered most important by music teachers as a whole, include:

> (1) enthusiasm for teaching and caring for students; (2) strong, but fair discipline; (3) observable student enjoyment, interest, and participation; (4) communication skills . . .; (5) sense of humor; (6) in depth musicianship . . .; (7) knowledge and use of good literature; (8) strong rapport with students individually and the group as a whole; (9) high professional standards for him or herself; and (10) use of positive group management techniques (p. 205).

Interestingly, there are differences in identified teacher competencies based on content specialties. Choral directors, for example, cited (1) musicianship and (2) skill in

diagnosing and correcting problems during rehearsal as the most important competencies. Contrastingly, general music teachers felt that the most important competencies were (1) the ability to present creative, well-paced lessons involving a variety of activities and (2) enthusiasm for teaching and caring for students. Finally, instrumental directors listed a (1) good working knowledge of all instruments and (2) strong, yet fair discipline as their most important competencies.

Characteristics of Effective Music Teachers

One major conclusion of a study by Yarbrough and Price (1981) was that ensemble directors who maintained frequent eye contact with their students had more productive musical and rehearsal behavior. In another study, Yarbrough (1975) examined the effect that high "magnitude" versus low "magnitude" conductors have on mixed choruses. Four mixed choruses (one university and three high schools) were all rehearsed under three different conductors: (1) regular conductor, (2) high magnitude conductor, and (3) low magnitude conductor. The high magnitude conductor demonstrated such behaviors as frequent eye contact, frequently walking or leaning toward chorus, constant variation in volume of speaking voice reflecting enthusiasm and vitality, great use of physical gestures and facial expressions, and a rapid and exciting rehearsal pace (e.g., less than one second delay between activity). Not surprisingly, the students not only were more attentive and performed better while under the high magnitude director, but also preferred working with this type of conductor.

Sasala's (1980) research of bands confirms Yarbrough's results. He examined various characteristics of exemplary high school band programs and found that the students' success was reflective of the energy and enthusiasm of the director.

Based on Ann Small's (1979) work, pacing and energy is also essential for effective general music teaching. Defined as the "act of moving through each activity in a lesson plan in addition to the transition periods between activities" (p. 32), effective

pacing occurs when the "tempo of the lesson" is appropriate for the age and interest level of the learners.

She notes that a music teacher can improve pacing by (1) spending more time on music and (2) minimizing the necessary but nonmusical activities (like giving verbal instructions, walking from one place in the room to another, or writing on the board). Having music materials and records in place prior to the lesson facilitates effective pacing. Carefully planning with special emphasis on limiting the amount of time spent on each activity further contributes to appropriate pacing.

Finally, Small states that effective music teachers deal with the transitions between activities in special ways. For example, she recommends the use of "creatively disguised" transitions so that each activity does not have a perceptable beginning and ending. Specifically, she states that "singing, pantomiming, conducting, and moving can hide transitions--even those that include instructions" (p. 33). Head nods, hand motions and other gestures can frequently improve pacing by eliminating delays between activities.

Taebel and Coker (1980) studied 29 elementary general music teachers to see if there was a relationship between what music teachers do in the classroom (teacher competencies) and the amount of student learning as measured by Colwell's (1969) Music Achievement Test 1. These researchers found, for example, that students learn more when music teachers relate the lesson objectives to their students' interests and needs. For instance, music teachers are more effective when they allow students to suggest ideas for lessons, encourage student enthusiasm for class activities and are particularly sensitive to student interests and abilities. Also, Taebel and Coker noted that the more effective elementary general music teachers use a variety of instructional methods.

Summary

Based on these studies, a profile of the effective music teacher is emerging. It is important to note, however, that teacher effectiveness research in music education is still in its infancy and thus needs to be interpreted cautiously. Given the diversity in pupils, schools, music teachers, administrative support, and community and home expectations, a single profile of the "effective music teacher" is probably too restrictive. On the other hand what we do know about music teacher effectiveness needs to be thoughtfully considered by the music education profession. The profile that is emerging is based on the relatively few studies which have been completed in music education. Much more research is needed.

The research that has been discussed shows that effective music teachers tend to be extroverted, enthusiastic and sincerely care for their students. As expected, the students in these successful music teachers' classes actively participate and show interest and enjoyment. Competencies which characterize effective teachers include: (1) musicianship, particularly skill in diagnosing and correcting musical errors and use of voice in demonstrating performance technique; (2) skill in classroom and rehearsal management; and (3) the ability to relate lesson objectives to students' interests and needs.

A sense of pacing is apparently an essential quality for effective music teachers. Their classes and rehearsals have a sense of forward momentum; delays between each activity or rehearsal piece are minimized or even eliminated. Effective music teachers demonstrate high energy and enthusiasm in the rehearsal or classroom. Frequent eye contact, use of physical gestures, and variation of facial expressions and speaking voice are characteristics of many effective directors. These music teachers have a rapid and exciting rehearsal pace.

Efforts to formally study teacher effectiveness probably date back to the twenties and thirties with A. S. Barr's (1930) work. Many looked upon his attempts to

systematically and objectively evaluate teachers as a fad, believing that teaching was far too complex and dependent upon personality and other intangible factors to yield to the methods of research. Probably no one could have imagined at that time that nearly sixty years later the public and their legislative representatives would be insisting that teachers be assessed by their classroom performance and that their certification be contingent upon such assessments (Medley, 1982). For example, in Florida, teachers must pass the Florida Certification Exam, consisting of basic skills (math, reading, and writing), and professional competencies are actually verified during the first year of teaching before the issuance of regular certification. Plans are underway in other states such as Arkansas, Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, and South Carolina to use tests or actual classroom observations to determine teachers' effectiveness (Villeme, 1982).

The question is, are perceptions of effective music teaching based upon fuzzy concepts and educational folklore? We, in music education, need to assure ourselves that our beliefs, expectations and means of assessing teacher effectiveness reflect empirical knowledge and our profession's best collective wisdom.

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